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Air Force disciplines 15 as IG finds that security failures led to massive classified documents leak

By TARA COPP
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Air Force has disciplined 15 personnel in connection with the massive classified documents leak by an airman earlier this year, concluding that multiple officials intentionally failed to take required action on his suspicious behavior, the Air Force inspector general reported Monday.

Massachusetts Air National Guard member Jack Teixeira is accused of leaking highly classified military from the 102nd Intelligence Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts where he worked.

The punitive actions range from relieving personnel from their positions, including command positions, to non-judicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Teixeira, who's 21, has been behind bars since his April arrest on charges stemming from the most consequential intelligence leak in years.



This artist depiction shows Massachusetts Air National Guardsman Jack Teixeira, right, appearing in U.S. District Court in Boston, April 14, 2023.

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Associated Press
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Air Force disciplines 15 as IG finds that security failures led to massive classified documents leak

Continued from Front

He is charged under the Espionage Act with unauthorized retention and transmission of classified national defense information. He has pleaded not guilty, and no trial date has been set.

Prosecutors said in a court filing last week that the two sides have not yet engaged in "substantive" plea discussions.

Teixeira enlisted in the Air National Guard in 2019. He shared military secrets he illegally collected from his intelligence unit with other Discord users, authorities said — first by typing out classified documents he accessed and then sharing photographs of files that bore SECRET and TOP SECRET markings.

In its investigation of the leaks, the Air Force inspector general found both security gaps occurred in part because personnel had access to classified documents without supervision, and because in instances where Airman 1st Class Teixeira was caught violating security policies none of the personnel who either witnessed the violations or had responsibility for Teixeira took the actions necessary in response.



This image contained in Justice Department motion for continued pretrial detention of Jack Teixeira, shows electronic items recovered from a dumpster at his mother and stepfather's home in North Dighton, Mass.

Associated Press

Teixeira worked as a cyber transport systems specialist, essentially an information technology specialist responsible for military communications networks. As such, Teixeira had often unsupervised access as part of a three-person team at night to Top Secret-Secret Compartmentalized facility to perform maintenance inspections. Teixeira remains in the Air National Guard in an unpaid status, Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek said.

"At times, members were required to perform preventive maintenance inspections and other tasks, which required individuals to be on their own for

hours, unsupervised in other parts of the facility," the IG found. "Further, no permission controls were in place to monitor print jobs, and there were no business rules for print products. Any night shift member had ample opportunity to access (classified) sites and print a high volume of products without supervision or detection." Inside Teixeira's 102nd Intelligence Support Squadron, members had what the IG described as a "more complete" picture of the breadth of Teixeira's active unauthorized intelligence-seeking but "intentionally failed to report the full details of these security concerns" because they

thought security officials might overreact, the IG found. For example, in fall 2022 Teixeira was seen writing down notes from a classified document onto a Post-It note. While he was confronted about the note, there was no follow up to ensure the note had been shredded and the incident was not reported to security officers.

It was not until a January 2023 incident that the appropriate security officials were notified, but even then security officials were not briefed on the full scope of the violations.

If any of the personnel had taken the appropriate actions, "the length and depth of the unauthorized and unlawful disclosures by several months," the IG found.

Those unit officials "who understood their duty to report specific information regarding A1C Teixeira's intelligence-seeking and insider threat indicators to security officials, intentionally failed to do so."

But the IG also said the unit's own policy, which encouraged its tech support service members to attend intelligence briefings "to better understand the mission and the importance of keeping the classified

networks operating," was improper and problematic because it exposed the service members to higher levels of classified material than they needed to know. The documents released on social media revealed sensitive U.S. intelligence on the Russia-Ukraine war, the Middle East and an array of other topics.

As a result of the security breach, Col. Sean Riley, 102nd Intelligence Wing commander, received administrative action and was relieved of command and the 102nd Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group commander Col. Enrique Dovalo, received administrative action for concerns with unit culture and compliance with policies and standards.

The Air Force also said previously suspended commanders from the 102nd Intelligence Support Squadron and the detachment overseeing administrative support for airmen at the unit mobilized for duty under Title 10 USC were permanently removed.

The Air Force took the intelligence mission from the 102nd after Teixeira's leaks were discovered and the group's mission remains reassigned to other units. □



U.S. Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., left, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, center, and President and CEO of BAE Systems Tom Arseneault, right, walk together during a visit to BAE Systems, in Nashua, N.H., Monday, Dec. 11, 2023.

Associated Press

By JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration announced the first of many coming federal invest-

ments in computer chip production, saying Monday that it would provide \$35 million for BAE Systems to increase production at a New Hampshire factory

Biden administration says New Hampshire computer chip plant the first to get funding from CHIPS law

making chips for military aircraft, including F-15 and F-35 jets. This would be the initial allocation of incentives from last year's bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act, which provides more than \$52 billion to boost the development and manufacturing of semiconductors in the United States.

The Commerce Department's choice of a military contractor instead of a conventional chip manufacturer reveals the national security focus of the law, as more and more weapons systems depend on advanced chips that could be decisive in both pre-

venting and fighting wars.

"We can't gamble with our national security by depending solely on one part of the world or even one country for crucial advanced technologies," said Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, who called the investments a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to advance our national and economic security and create a thriving, long-lasting domestic semiconductor manufacturing industry." President Joe Biden signed the incentives into law in August 2022 partly out of concerns that a military attack on Taiwan could

deprive the world of advanced computer chips and plunge the U.S. into a recession. The coronavirus pandemic revealed the fragility of computer chip supplies as a worldwide shortage curbed U.S. auto production and pushed up prices around the start of Biden's presidency.

"Over the coming year, the Department of Commerce will award billions more to make more semiconductors in America, invest in research and development capabilities to keep America at the forefront of new technologies," Biden said in a statement. □

Biden is hosting a Hanukkah ceremony at the White House

By **WILL WEISSERT**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is hosting a White House reception Monday evening to mark Hanukkah, celebrating the festival of lights as he has continued to denounce rising antisemitism in the U.S. and abroad amid the Israel-Hamas war.

The president, first lady Jill Biden and second gentleman Doug Emhoff will attend the event with nearly 800 guests. Invitees include Holocaust survivors, members of Congress, state and local officials, entertainers, and leaders from across the Jewish religious denominations, the White House says.

A menorah is lit nightly during the eight-day Jewish festival, which this year is being celebrated from Dec. 7 until Friday.

The White House reception will be led by Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, Senior Rabbi at Central Synagogue in New York City, and feature menorah lighting by Emhoff and White House staff that are descendants of Holocaust survivors.

Biden plans to talk about how Hanukkah is a timeless story of miracles, and that even in dark times we



A man returns to his seat during the National Chanukah Menorah lighting, Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023, on the Ellipse near the White House in Washington.

can find the light, the White House says.

Earlier Monday, a group of protesters staged a demonstration outside the White House, as nearly 20 women describing themselves as "Jewish elders" chained their bodies to the fence guarding the White House. Wearing black T-shirts that read "Not In Our Name," the women chanted "Biden, Biden, pick a side! Cease-fire not genocide!"

while reading the names of those killed in Gaza, along with their ages.

Officers from U.S. Park Police eventually took the women away, after using a bolt cutter to cut the chains that had encircled the protesters' waists. Organizers said they deliberately picked Monday the day of the White House's Hanukkah celebration to protest. "We as elder Jews, we know what genocide looks like.

We know what genocide feels like. It's in our bodies, in our bones," said Esther Farmer of Jewish Voice for Peace, which organized the demonstration. "It's horrifying, it's devastating. Sometimes, it's hard to get up in the morning to see this, and it's being done in the name of Jews. So we are here as elderly Jews to say, not in our name."

The U.S. Park Police said they issued 18 citations to

the protesters and released them from custody.

The Biden administration in May announced what it called the first-ever national strategy to counter antisemitism. That laid out more than 100 actions, including a series of steps to raise awareness and understanding of antisemitism and the threat it poses around the U.S.

Still, antisemitism has only intensified in some quarters since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants sparked Israel's ongoing war in Gaza, which faces heightened criticism for the mounting Palestinian death toll. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza and urged its members to demand an immediate humanitarian cease-fire.

The husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, Emhoff is the first Jewish person to be the spouse of one of the country's nationally elected leaders. Last week, he presided over the lighting ceremony of a massive menorah in front of the White House to mark Hanukkah's first night, saying then that American Jews are "feeling alone" and "in pain." □

Associated Press

The U.S. is restricting visas for nearly 300 Guatemalan lawmakers, others for 'undermining democracy'

By **GISELA SALOMON**
Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The Biden administration announced on Monday that it would impose visa restrictions on nearly 300 Guatemalan lawmakers, private sector leaders and their families it accuses of "undermining democracy and the rule of law."

Guatemala faces mounting criticism by world leaders and watchdogs accusing it of attempts to block progressive president-elect Bernardo Arévalo from taking office in January.

The victory of Arévalo

and his Seed Movement party is seen as a threat to those who have long wielded power in Guatemala.



President-elect Bernardo Arévalo gives a press conference in Guatemala City, Friday, Dec. 8, 2023.

Associated Press

The anti-corruption crusader has been a target for months, with arrests of party members, raids and repeated requests to lift his immunity so prosecutors can investigate him directly. The State Department in a statement condemned "ongoing anti-democratic actions" by prosecutors and other actors and noted "intent to delegitimize Guatemala's free and fair elections and prevent the peaceful transition of power."

The State Department did not provide The Associated Press with the names of

those subject to visa restrictions.

In its statement, it said those individuals were "responsible for, or complicit in" political targeting of opposition, intimidation of peaceful protestors, raids, opening of ballot boxes and lifting of immunity of electoral magistrates who certified the election.

Last week, prosecutors alleged that minutes seized during a raid of electoral offices showed that results from the presidential runoff vote Arévalo won in August had irregularities and were therefore void. □

Texas woman who sought court permission for abortion leaves state for the procedure, attorneys say

By **PAUL J. WEBER**
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A pregnant Texas woman who sought court permission for an abortion in an unprecedented challenge to one of the most restrictive bans in the U.S. has left the state to obtain the procedure, her attorneys said Monday.

The announcement came as Kate Cox, 31, was awaiting a ruling from the Texas Supreme Court over whether she could legally obtain an abortion under narrow exceptions to the state's ban. A judge gave Cox, a mother of two from the Dallas area, permission last week but that decision was put on hold by the state's all-Republican high court.

"Her health is on the line. She's been in and out of the emergency room and she couldn't wait any longer," said Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, which was representing Cox.

The organization did not disclose where Cox went. On Monday, she was 20



Demonstrators gather at the federal courthouse in Austin, Texas, following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, June 24, 2022.

weeks and six days pregnant.

Cox was believed to be the first woman in the U.S. to ask a court for permission for an abortion since Roe v. Wade was overturned last year. Her lawsuit quickly became a high-profile test of bans in Texas and a dozen other GOP-controlled

states, where abortion is prohibited at nearly all stages of pregnancy.

Days after Cox filed her lawsuit, a pregnant woman in Kentucky also asked a court to allow an abortion. There has been no ruling yet in that case.

Earlier Monday, two medical groups in the U.S. urged

the Texas Supreme Court to rule in favor of Cox. Her attorneys said she had been to the emergency at least four times since becoming pregnant again in August.

"The pervasive 'climate of fear' among the Texas medical community is certain to be made worse by this case and the State's

actions in opposing the abortion Ms. Cox needs," read the brief, which was filed by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

Texas' abortion ban makes narrow exceptions when the life of the mother is in danger but not for fetal anomalies.

Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who has defended the state's strict anti-abortion laws for nearly a decade, argued that Cox did not demonstrate that the pregnancy had put her life in danger.

"The Texas Legislature did not intend for courts to become revolving doors of permission slips to obtain abortions," Paxton's office wrote in a filing to the state Supreme Court last week.

Doctors told Cox that her fetus has a condition known as trisomy 18, which has a very high likelihood of miscarriage or stillbirth, and low survival rates, according to her lawsuit filed last week in Austin. □

Associated Press

Commercial fishermen need more support for substance abuse and fatigue, lawmakers say

By **PATRICK WHITTLE**
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — A federal program that protects the health and well-being of commercial fishermen should be expanded to include substance use disorder and worker fatigue, a group of lawmakers from New England and Alaska said.

The lawmakers want to expand a federal commercial fishing occupational safety program that funds research and training. The program is designed to help the nation's fishermen with the often hazardous conditions they face at sea. Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who is one of the lawmakers pushing for the change, said expanding

the program would help fishermen access more safety training and mental health resources. Collins and the lawmakers introduced the proposal late last week.

"Every day, our fishermen are faced with demanding and dangerous working conditions that take both a physical and mental toll, all while they work to bring food to the tables of families across the country," said another member of the group, Democratic Sen. Edward Markey of Massachusetts, who added the expansion would "provide much needed funding to ensure that fishermen are getting the information and resources they need to stay safe and healthy on

the job."

Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan of Alaska is another supporter of the change. Alaska produces the most volume of seafood in the country, while New England is home to New Bedford, Massachusetts, the top U.S. port in terms of seafood value.

The lawmakers' proposed changes would increase the program's annual funding from \$6 million to \$12 million, a Collins spokesperson said. The proposal would also remove a cost share component from the program, the spokesperson said. Commercial fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in the country, and access to more mental and behavioral

health supports is critically important for the nation's fishermen, said Andrea Tomlinson, founder and executive director of New England Young Fishermen's Alliance.

"Providing our next generation of fishermen and women with the mental health and substance abuse care that they need is vital to the success of our industry," Tomlinson said. □



Salmon fisherman stack their nets on June 22, 2023, in Kodiak, Alaska.

Associated Press

Iraq scrambles to contain fighting between U.S. troops and Iran-backed groups, fearing Gaza spillover

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Dozens of attacks on U.S. military facilities by Iran-backed factions in Iraq over the past two months as the Israel-Hamas war has raged have forced Baghdad into a balancing act that's becoming more difficult by the day.

A rocket attack on the sprawling U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Friday marked a further escalation as Iraqi officials scramble to contain the ripple effects of the latest Middle East war.

Iran holds considerable sway in Iraq and a coalition of Iran-backed groups brought Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to power in October 2022. At the same time, there are some 2,000 U.S. troops in Iraq under an agreement with Baghdad, mainly to counter the militant Islamic State group.

Baghdad also relies heavily on Washington's sanctions waivers to buy electricity from Iran, and since the 2003 U.S. invasion, Iraq's foreign currency reserves have been housed at the U.S. Federal Reserve, giving the Americans significant control over Iraq's supply of dollars. Al-Sudani's predecessors also had to walk a delicate line between



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken returns to Baghdad International Airport from the International Zone via helicopter after meeting Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, at Baghdad International Airport in Baghdad, Iraq, on Nov. 5, 2023.

Tehran and Washington, but the Israel-Hamas war has considerably upped the stakes. Since the war erupted on Oct. 7, at least 92 attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria have been claimed by an umbrella group of Iran-backed Iraqi militants dubbed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. The militants say their attacks are in retaliation for Washington's backing of Israel and its military presence in Iraq and Syria.

Al-Sudani has condemned the attacks and U.S. counter-strikes as a violation of

his country's sovereignty. He has also ordered authorities to pursue militants involved in the attacks, most of which caused no injuries and only minor damage. His office declined further comment. Washington has sent messages that its patience is wearing thin.

After the embassy attack, the Pentagon said that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin "made clear (to al-Sudani) that attacks against U.S. forces must stop."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told al-Sudani that Washington expects

Iraqi officials to take more action to prevent such attacks, and believes they have the capability to do so, a U.S. official told The Associated Press.

During a recent trip to the region, CIA Director William Burns warned al-Sudani of "harsh consequences" if Iraq doesn't act to stop the attacks, an Iraqi official said.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with briefing regulations.

In a call with the Iraqi premier earlier this month, Blinken said that Ameri-

cans would take matters into their own hands, arguing that Baghdad had not done enough to pursue the perpetrators, according to two Iraqi officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

Two days later, a U.S. strike on a drone launch site near the Iraqi city of Kirkuk killed five militants.

The U.S. and much of the international community have scrambled to prevent the war in the besieged Gaza Strip from expanding across the region.

Analyst Renad Mansour said he believes Iran is making sure the attacks remain below a threshold that would provoke a major U.S. response. "Both Iran and Iraq have maintained thus far a clear line that, at the moment, Iraq cannot turn into a playground that could destabilize the Sudani government," said Mansour, a senior research fellow at the Chatham House think tank. He said that's partially due to Iraq's role of passing messages between Washington and Tehran. Sometimes the messenger is al-Sudani. In early November, Blinken met with al-Sudani in Baghdad a day before the Iraqi prime minister was set to visit Tehran. □

Officials say a U.S. pilot safely ejected before his F-16 crashed into the sea off South Korea



U.S. Air Force's F-16 fighter takes off during an annual joint air exercise "Max Thunder" between South Korea and the U.S. at Kunsan Air Base in Gunsan, South Korea on April 20, 2017.

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

A U.S. Air Force pilot safely ejected on Monday before his F-16 fighter jet crashed into the sea off South Korea's southwestern coast, U.S. and South Korean military officials said.

The unidentified pilot was recovered by South Korean maritime forces and was "awake and in stable condition," the U.S. 8th Fighter Wing said in a statement. It said the pilot was being returned to Kunsan Air Base

near the southwestern port city of Gunsan, where he would be evaluated further.

The pilot took off from the air base, used jointly by the U.S. and South Korean air forces, on a routine training flight and was forced to eject from the aircraft after experiencing an unspecified in-flight emergency.

The 8th Fighter Wing, which is composed of two F-16 squadrons, said the cause of the in-flight emergency

is being investigated.

"We are grateful for the safe recovery of our Airman by our ROK Allies and that the pilot is in good condition," Col. Matthew C. Gaetke, the 8th Fighter Wing commander, said in a statement, referring to the Republic of Korea, South Korea's official name.

A U.S. Air Force Osprey aircraft crashed off southern Japan on Nov. 29 during a training mission, killing all eight people on board. □

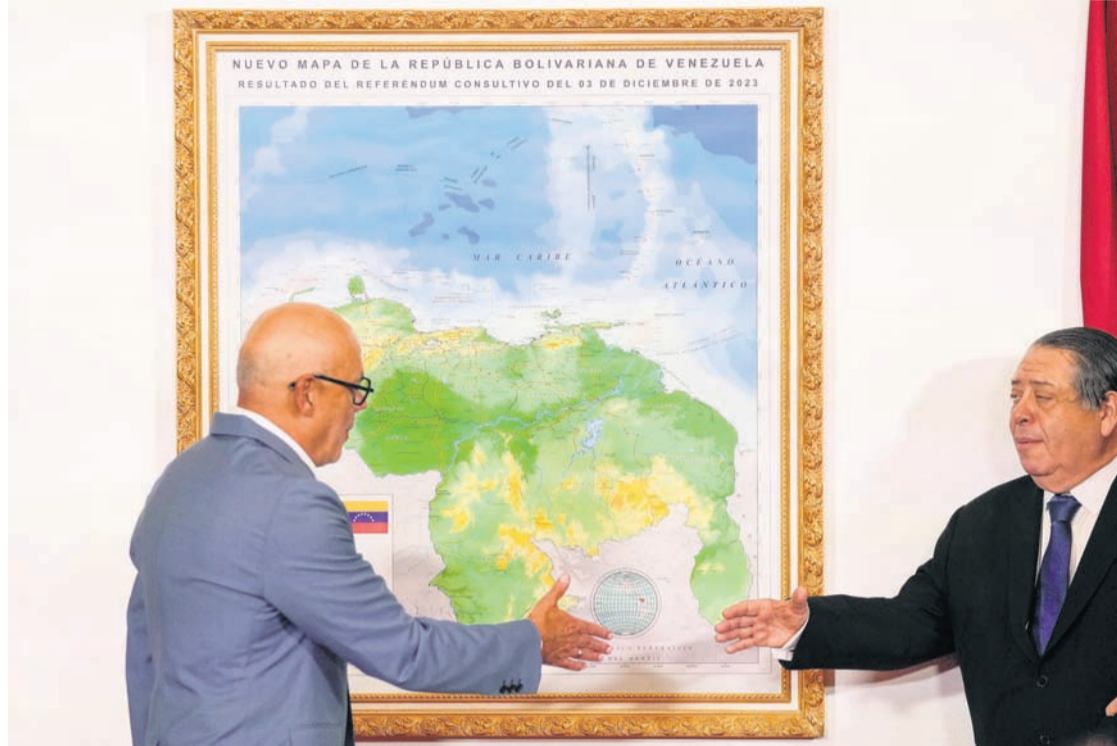
Leaders of Guyana and Venezuela to meet this week as region worries over their territorial dispute

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP) — As the leaders of Guyana and Venezuela prepare to meet this week to address an escalating dispute over a region rich in oil and minerals, Guyana's president said he is coming with "goodwill" but insisted that his country be respected and the case be heard at the International Court of Justice.

President Irfaan Ali spoke to reporters late Sunday, while his security detail wore shirts reading "ESSEQUIBO BELONGS TO GUYANA."

The dispute over Essequibo, which represents two-thirds of Guyana and borders Venezuela, worsened after Venezuela held a referendum earlier this month on whether to claim sovereignty over the region located near massive oil deposits.

Venezuela maintains that Essequibo was within its boundaries during the Spanish colonial period, and it rejects the border drawn by international arbitrators in 1899 when Guy-



National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez, left, and Chairman of the Special Commission for the Defense of Guyana Essequibo Hermann Escarra, shake hands after unveiling Venezuela's new map that includes the Essequibo territory, a swath of land that is administered and controlled by Guyana but claimed by Venezuela, in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, Dec. 8, 2023.

Associated Press

ana was under British rule. Guyana's president is scheduled to meet Thursday with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro behind closed doors on the eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent. Invited to the

talks are leaders including Brazilian President Inacio Lula da Silva.

"We are very confident that good sense will prevail," Ali said. "We want peace, but we must be respected." He stressed that Guyana

will not negotiate with Venezuela, insisting that the case be heard by the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands as planned.

"The world is behind us," he said.

When asked if the U.S. has committed any military aid, Ali said he signed an advanced defense agreement with the U.S. to ensure that "major training programs and exercises" will continue.

"We also are talking to many other partners," he said, without details. "We don't want any conflict. We don't want any war."

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil told reporters Monday that "any decision must be mutual" and asserted that the dispute cannot be settled by the world's court. He characterized the scheduled meeting as a "profound success" for Maduro, arguing that the Venezuelan president has long insisted on the need for dialogue between the countries.

In a video posted Sunday on social media, Gil said he met with his counterpart in Guyana and noted, "We are always in favor of dialogue between both countries to solve this controversy." □

Rescuers have recovered 11 bodies after landslides at a Zambia mine

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP) — Eleven informal miners have been confirmed dead and their bodies retrieved from an open-pit copper mine in Zambia after landslides

buried them in tunnels they were digging last month. One survivor has been found but up to 26 others remain missing and are feared dead nearly two

weeks after the disaster. Rescuers announced the latest death toll late on Sunday. The survivor, a 49-year-old man, was pulled out from underneath the debris last week and is recovering in the hospital, said the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit, which is overseeing the rescue operation.

Rescuers also retrieved the first two bodies last week. Nine more were recovered this weekend, the disaster management unit said.

Government officials say as many as 38 miners might have been buried under the landslides at the mine near the city of Chingola, on Zambia's copper belt, although they aren't certain of the exact number. They have been relying on

families to report missing relatives and fears were growing that the death toll could rise to more than 30. "Efforts to recover the remaining accident victims are ongoing," the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit said in a statement.

The disaster happened Nov. 30 when heavy rain caused landslides and the miners were buried in three separate tunnels while working in them late at night.

The rain also caused the area around the tunnels to be flooded and rescuers have had to pump out water from the site as well as clear rocks and earth. The army has been helping with the rescue operation. The miners are believed

to have been digging for copper ore illegally without the knowledge of the mine owner, making it difficult for authorities to know exactly how many were trapped underground.

Zambia is among the top 10 copper producers in the world. Chingola, which is around 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of the capital, Lusaka, has large open-pit mines, some of them stretching for kilometers (miles).

They are surrounded by huge waste piles of rocks and earth that have been dug out of the mines.

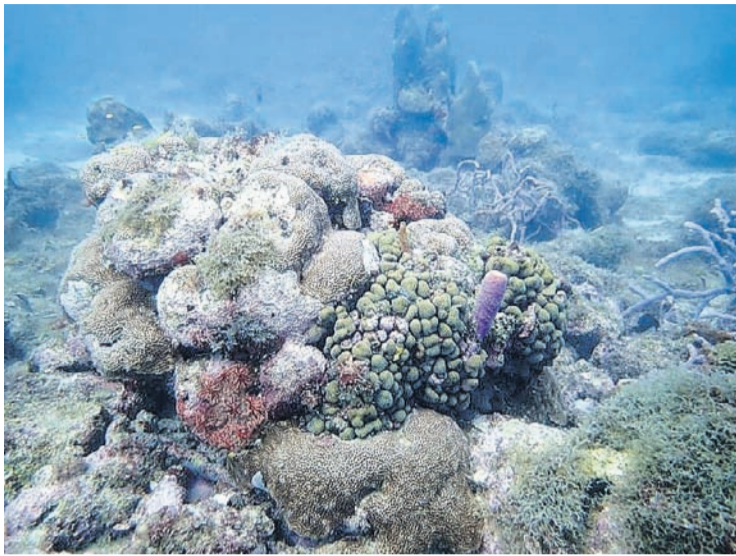
The government said debris from one of the waste piles is thought to have collapsed on the miners' tunnels in the heavy rain. □



Zambian Army special forces officers follow the rescue operation of miners on Sunday, Dec. 3, 2023 in Chingola, around 400 kilometres (248 miles) north of the capital Lusaka, Zambia.

Associated Press

Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!



(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco

Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They were also

able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times in the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and rare remnant of

geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete action in protecting and preserving our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! ☐

Blackstone Beach

(Oranjestad)—Named after its most recognizable feature, the Blackstone Beach almost represents the opposite of the typical Aruban beaches. For one, it has black sand and is covered in black smooth stones. Secondly, it lies on the northern side of the island, away from the white sandy beaches of in the southern region. So, if you feel up for something different—or if it's opposite day, visit the Blackstone Beach.

Blackstone Beach shows the more natural side of Aruba: the stones that cover the beaches and the shape of it has been crafted for thousand years via volcanic eruptions, coral reef movements and wave activity of the rural northern part of the island.

Located further east to the Natural Bridge and Andicuri Beach, the Blackstone Beach is relatively easy to access. Once you get



passed the Ayo Rock Formation, take the Andicuri road leading up to Andicuri Beach. There, you can park your car and take a 1km hike towards Blackstone Beach.

This beach forms part of the Arikok National Park and is therefore a site that is preserved. This is why it is also relatively untouched by commercial influences. Despite

being called a beach, do note that it is not advised to swim in the water, as the current is very strong and can easily stray you further in the wild ocean. However, you can still enjoy a spectacular view of the stones and the northern ocean that stretches out in front of the beach and take a picture with your friends or family! ☐



Paseo Herencia; An exciting destination for leisure and entertainment



NOORD — Paseo Herencia, situated in the heart of Palm Beach and within walking distance from the high-rise hotels, beckons with a diverse array of shopping, dining, and entertainment options in an outdoor setting.

Shopping

Paseo Herencia presents a captivating selection of stores catering to various preferences, encompassing beachwear, apparel, fragrances, footwear, jewelry, keepsakes, and much more. Unwind at Maggy's, indulging in their salon services while exploring a range of beauty products. For a memorable gift crafted from natural ingredients, explore Aruba Aloe's offerings. Iconic brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike, and Pandora stand among the favorites.

Dining

Embark on a global culinary journey at Paseo Herencia's diverse array of restaurants, each offering a unique dining experience. From the vibrant flavors of Iguana Cantina's Mexican cuisine to the Spanish elegance of Xixon Spanish Restaurant, the innovative fusion of Pizza and Sushi at Fusion Cuisine, the grilled delights of Skewers Grill, the comfort of The Lazy Turtle, the creativity at Drunk's Denial, and the seafood sensation of Sexy Shrimps Bar, and the familiar warmth of Starbucks, indulge in an unforgettable gastronomic adventure that spans the world's finest cuisines, all within the charming ambiance of our outdoor center.

VIP Cinema

Indulge in an unparalleled cinematic experience at Caribbean Cinemas VIP, nestled on Paseo Herencia's second floor. Relax in supremely comfortable reclining seats while enjoying movies on high-quality screens with state-of-the-art projection and 7.1 Dolby surround sound. Don't forget to relish the delectable buttery popcorn.

Entertainment

Paseo Herencia offers live entertainment from Monday to Friday at 8pm on the center stage, as well as captivating nightly watershows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm, and 9:30pm. Thrill-seekers can explore the Airsoft experience, located behind The Lazy Turtle. For picture-perfect moments, capture Instagram-worthy shots at the Angel Wings installation between Pandora and Free Spirit, or amidst the Flying mosaic hearts behind King Churros. There's more fun in store with delightful kids' activities, including a Kid's carousel and train ride, available every day from 6 pm to 10 pm.

Parking is complimentary for up to two hours when shopping, dining, or enjoying a movie at Paseo Herencia. Simply present your purchase receipt to the parking cashier. For more details on specials and events, visit the Paseo Herencia website at www.paseoherencia.com.



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Foundation Snoop Doggy launches its end of year poster in connection with fireworks and pets

As we gear up for the New Year, it's no secret that the tradition of fireworks illuminates our island, creating a captivating spectacle each night. Amidst the festivity, it's crucial to consider our pets, who lack the means to convey their unease amid the resounding noises.

Recognizing this, the Foundation Snoop Doggy is pleased to announce the release of their year-end poster. This informative piece provides essential insights into caring for your pets during the celebratory season,

ensuring a tranquil and enjoyable experience for all. For further details and inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us at 568 6030 or visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FoundationSnoopDoggy>.

In anticipation of the upcoming year, the Snoop Doggy Foundation extends heartfelt wishes to the entire Aruban community. May the year 2024 bring abundant joy, good health, and increased affection for both our human and four-legged companions. ☐

Education is the Key!

A Few Tips:

- 1) Keep your pet at a distance from fireworks, and never launch them in the direction of your pet.
- 2) Ensure your pet remains calm by maintaining a sense of normalcy and calm. If your pet seeks attention or companionship, provide it. If your pet prefers a quieter environment, accommodate that preference. Never penalize your pet for displaying fear!
- 3) Take measures such as closing curtains, leaving lights on, and shutting blinds and doors to create a secure space. Amplifying the volume of the TV or radio can help drown out external noises.
- 4) Ensure your pet is microchipped, facilitating easier identification and return if it strays due to loud noises.
- 5) Consider providing them with a calming pill, available from a veterinarian or pet store, ensuring your pet stays in a secure area within the house, like a bathroom or a quiet room.

Foundation Snoop Doggy | +297 568 6030 | [foundationsnoopdoggy](https://www.instagram.com/foundationsnoopdoggy) | foundationsnoopdoggy@gmail.com

Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and

where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of

its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received a lovely message from Meli'sa Morgan who's visiting us from Queens, New York.

She wrote to us saying: "I am from QUEENS, NEW YORK and I have been coming to Aruba as an Owner for over 23 years! celebrating my Birthday. My cousin James W. Jones introduced me to Aruba and comes here every year as well to Celebrate my Birthday with me.

I Love Aruba and I love the restaurants and food. I like eating outside.



Aruba to me is experiencing a beautiful atmosphere outside for dinner. Like Las Ramblas at La Cabana Resort Hotel. So many Wonderful places to dine and enjoy Live music while you eat.

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! ☐



Episode 84 Bonfires, light and darkness



All around the world there are popular festivals where bonfires play an important role and a well-known for our island is the festival of San Juan during the summer solstice. Traditionally, bonfires were lit to protect the townspeople from the evil spirits that were believed to roam the Earth when the sun was heading south.

In Aruba it is a night expected by the community and with the firefighters on alert. But what mysteries do bonfires unveil and what is behind these celebra-

tions? When we all lit a fire, we were absorbed for a moment before the sinuosity of the flames and closing our eyes, we breathed strongly the fragrance that emanates. There is no doubt that yesterday's bonfires were a ritual practice, but what made them magical?

Branches, barks, fruits and roots are lit in the bonfires. But not everything burned generates the same effect. From time to time, fire manifests itself in a special way. Sometimes with a

strange fragrance, others with perfume perhaps are intoxicating.

Since ancient times, before a bonfire, the human being has encountered a mystery difficult to explain. Surely the fire or the smoke of those bonfires made him come into contact with ghosts, monsters and incomprehensible beings to which he undoubtedly gave a divine character. The shamans were always there to clarify what was happening since they were the experts in igneous subjects. Not to mention also a hallucinogenic state

caused by the combustion of certain plant components of alkaloids that led them to another world. Ancient cultures see the fire of the bonfire as a way to achieve purification. A tribute to those who do not fear but respect and who they wanted to be close to.

The smoke of incense or a resin such as myrrh, the grace of a bonfire of a particular tree was the remedies used through fire to reach other states of consciousness. In this way, in the bonfires, gods, demons and different entities participated in a ritual communion. Flames have the power of change; nothing that belongs to nature remains the same after being consumed by fire. Everything changes undergoes a metamorphosis and even death. All cultures relate in one way or another fire with death. We have the symbolic hell of perpetual flames in which to burn according to Christian tradition or the purifying fire that eliminates the physical residue of the body allowing its evolution and future reincarnation, according to Hindu tradition.

For many cultures, the deceased, helped by the fire, left this world, heading to the other, guided by the unknown entities that lived in the flames and through them reached another universe. It is not surprising that through the flames of a bonfire we await a response from those who are no longer... Behind old doors mysteries or ancestral knowledge is waiting for you.

To get to know a little more regarding Aruba's and its cultural origins, etc., we highly recommend you to book your participation in our cultural encounter session. A mind opening revelation and entertaining island experience.

Source; Island Insight column by Etnia Nativa





Article by: Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to the high rise hotels



Aruba: the legend behind its name

(Oranjestad)—Most folkloric tales and legends in Aruba revolve around our indigenous ancestors, who came from mainland Venezuela, and discovered the island and made it into their new home. This particular legend tells the story of the birth of the Aruba name.

The legend follows the life of Arua, an indigenous Cacique originally from Aroa in the Falcon state in Venezuela in the year 50 AD. Arua had a son around the year 70 AD with his wife Shira, who they named Corobori. When Corobori was old enough, he joined his father on the usual boat trip to the islands of Curacao and Bonaire to gather salt.

On their way back to Mainland Venezuela, they were caught up in a heavy rain storm—a side effect from a passing, but far away, hurricane. Of course, because of the lack of motors and sail, their boat was left in the mercy of the heavy winds. After a while, the storm started to pass, and the clouds began to clear up. Finally able to see around them, the Cacique spotted land approximately an hour away. So, they started to row in that direction until they reached the coast.

Once they arrived on what they thought was Venezuela, they decided to stay the night and fix their kayak. The next morning, the Cacique ordered his son and a few warriors to go find any sign of population in the area: "Corobori," Arua said. "Don't come back without news. It's in your hands how long we stay here till we find our family. So, if you need to take a week to gather information, we will wait for you."

"Don't worry," Corobori replied. "As soon as we have any information, we will let you know." Armed with arrows and spears, backpacks filled with food and water containers, they set off. They climbed several small hills, but no sign of a village. They crossed different dry riverbeds, but no sign of anything. When the sun finally descended, they found themselves near a fairly tall hill and decided to climb it for a better view of a village. This hill was called Pan Dushi or Orcuyo, which today we call Hooiberg.

The next morning, they could clearly see that they have landed on an island, but an unfamiliar one at that. When Corobori went back to where his father was waiting, he told him the news: "Father Arua, you have just discovered an island, but it is not Curacao or Bonaire. Far in the south, we saw the big mountains of our homeland Venezuela, which we could have never seen on the other island. This leads us to believe we are on a new island. But that's not all. When the sun came up, we saw in the distance a glowing plain, which we think may be salt."

The Cacique was pleased to hear of his son's findings. He decided to stay a couple days on the newly-discovered island in search for salt. The next morning they ascended Hooiberg again and stayed to see if they could find nearby smoke, indicating an inhabitant village. But they found nothing. So they went back to their initial arrival settlement, now known as Santo Largo in Savaneta. The next morning they hiked along the Spaans Lagoen near the Mangel Halto Beach and reached the area of Bushiri. There, they boarded their kayaks and heading to what we know now as Malmok, where they found rocks of salt. After a couple days of exploring the island and gathering some salt rocks, they left for Venezuela, where they were reunited with their families.

Throughout the year, they travelled back and forth to Aruba, collecting salt. After a while they settled on the island, generations of families living along the coast. Corobori was the first indigenous inhabitant in our history to explore the entirety of the island.

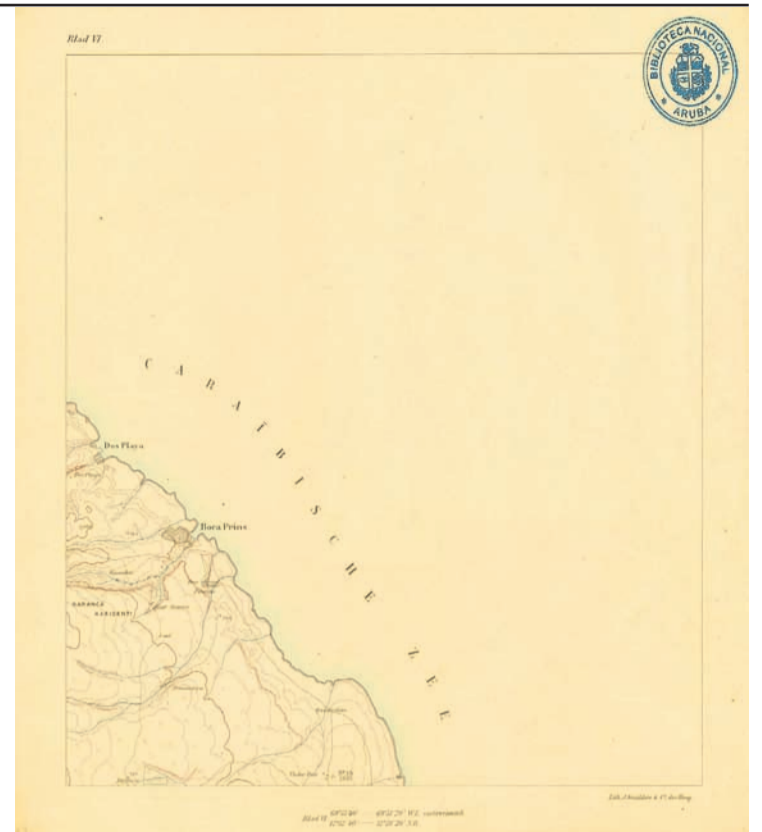
Arua, after decades as the leader of his tribe, spent his last days on the island. Having reached 80 years old, he called for his family on his death bed. In his hammock, he said: "My children, many years have passed, and I've asked my warrior to bring me back to the island so I can laid to rest. The God of living has given me the gift of life to see my son, grandchildren and great grandchildren. But now he is calling me home. Corobori, my torch is now passed to you. Guide our people, and be the leader you were always meant to become. If one day you leave my island, do not forget that it is also yours. This is my last wish: When I die, bury me in our maize plantation."

And so when the Cacique passed away, his wishes were granted and he was laid to rest in the area we now know as the Paradera Cemetery. Where he used to live, they built the Paradera Church.

And that is the tale of what inspired the Aruba name. In the generations that lived or travelled back and forth to the island, there were many familiar names*, like Guadiriki, a warrior who was there when the island got discovered and his son, whom he called Huliba; Corobori and his children, Corodori, Camacuri and Turibana, Masiduri; and Malmok, the 13-year-old boy who alerted the Cacique when the Caribes attacked.

Familiar names: all these names are familiar to Arubans, as these are the names of places and plants on the island.

Source: Un storia di e Indjan Arua (A story of the Indian Arua) by Adolf (Dufi) Kock



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 43 Burglar alarm part
 - 1 Craig of "Skyfall"
 - 7 Speedy
 - 11 Marigold color
 - 12 Ready for business
 - 13 Warning with no follow-through
 - 15 English racing town
 - 16 Shopping aid
 - 18 A+, for one
 - 21 Ethanol source
 - 22 Eye part
 - 24 Mine matter
 - 25 Sedan or SUV
 - 26 Like Pride Parade participants
 - 27 Willful
 - 29 Chess turn
 - 30 Placed down
 - 31 Fast runner
 - 32 Toil away
 - 34 Like some gas stations
 - 40 "Got it"
 - 41 Book worker
 - 42 Tavern order
- DOWN**
- 1 Buck's mate
 - 2 Ulna's place
 - 3 Catch some z's
 - 4 Hospital worker
 - 5 Sphinx setting
 - 6 "Why don't we!"
 - 7 Layout
 - 8 King Kong, for one
 - 9 Marlin's home
 - 10 Booming stuff
 - 14 "Iliad" author
 - 16 Reef material
 - 17 Game setting
 - 19 Strictness
 - 20 Rascal
 - 21 Farm grazer
 - 22 Operated
 - 23 Pro vote
 - 25 Musical closes
 - 28 Boat part
 - 29 Singer Gaye
 - 31 Large mob
 - 33 Honey bunch
 - 34 Tell tales
 - 35 Purpose
 - 36 Director Spike
 - 37 "— not for me to say"
 - 38 Pigeon sound
 - 39 Make missteps

A	B	A	C	K	R	E	N	A	L
P	E	C	A	N	A	R	E	N	A
P	E	E	V	E	P	A	T	T	Y
			A	L	O	T	S	I	S
S	M	A	L	L	D	O	G		
L	I	L	I		E	R	R	O	L
I	C	I	E	R		S	I	N	A
M	E	T	R	O	S		Z	E	T
			S	C	U	Z	Z	I	E
L	A	S			K	E	E	L	
A	M	U	S	E		B	I	P	E
M	O	N	E	T		R	E	E	V
A	S	S	E	S		A	S	P	E

Yesterday's answer

- 16 Reef
- 17 Game
- 19 Strictness
- 20 Rascal
- 21 Farm
- 22 Operated
- 23 Pro vote
- 25 Musical
- 28 Boat part
- 29 Singer
- 31 Large mob
- 33 Honey bunch
- 34 Tell tales
- 35 Purpose
- 36 Director
- 37 "— not for me to say"
- 38 Pigeon sound
- 39 Make missteps

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
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34	35	36						37	38	39
40										
42						43				

12-12

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-12

CRYPTOQUOTE

K 'G Q C Q L R Q U Y K E G F

R K M Y V J Y E Y O O Q E H I Q O Y

I C Q O C K E T C X U X B E C Q I

T X K E T X B C . — Q E X E F G X B I

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: SNOWFALL ROUSES YOUR INNER CHILD TO DREAM AND PLAY ONCE MORE. — ANGIE WEILAND-CROSBY

Investing for retirement Why you might want to reconsider that 403(b)



The likeness of George Washington is seen on a U.S. one dollar bill, March 13, 2023, in Marple Township, Pa.

Associated Press

By LIZ WESTON
of NerdWallet

Like many other educators, high school science teacher Robert Curtiss of Dearborn, Michigan, thought he was doing the right thing by investing in his school district's 403(b) retirement plan. Then federal regulators charged the company handling Curtiss' investments with fraud. In July 2022, the Securities and Exchange Commission said Equitable Financial Life Insurance Co. had misled investors mostly public school employees about what their investments cost. Equitable often issued quarterly statements showing \$0 in fees, when in reality the expenses were much higher, according to the SEC. Equitable agreed to pay a \$50 million civil penalty to harmed investors.

After hearing about the fine, Curtiss learned that his retirement investments were costing him two to three times what a typical 401(k) investor would pay. Getting his money out would cost even more: the investments, known as variable annuities, had surrender charges of 5% to 6%.

"I felt so frustrated," Curtiss

says. "If I would have known sooner, I would have never put my money there in the first place."

NOT ALL RETIREMENT PLANS ARE CREATED EQUAL

Like 401(k)s, 403(b)s are employer-provided retirement plans that allow workers to make pretax contributions through payroll deduction. But 401(k)s are typically offered by private sector employers, while 403(b)s are sponsored by schools, universities, religious organizations and certain other charities. The type of 403(b) available to public school employees often has fewer consumer protections than private sector 401(k)s, says Dan Otter, a former school-teacher and co-founder of 403bwise (, a nonprofit education and advocacy site. Employers providing 401(k)s are held to a fiduciary standard, which means they must act in their employees' best interests. As a result, 401(k)s typically offer a diversified mix of investments at reasonable cost. Employers typically choose a single investment company, known as a custodian, to manage the plan and keep records.

Fiduciary rules typically don't apply to public school 403(b) plans, Otter says. School districts may contract with dozens of companies to offer retirement investments while refusing to provide employees with any guidance or advice, he says. That's when insurance companies peddling expensive investments, including variable annuities and high-cost mutual funds, step in.

"Guess who is emailing teachers? Guess who is going to the school districts and offering free lunch? It's the high-cost companies doing this," Otter explains. And costs make a huge difference in how much an investor is able to accumulate. For example, someone who contributes \$500 a month and pays 1% annually in fees could amass about \$1 million after 40 years, assuming 7% average annual returns. The investor who pays 2% in annual fees could end up with \$230,000 less.

OFTEN, A LOWER-COST OPTION IS AVAILABLE

Otter's site evaluates public school 403(b) plans, rating each vendor according to a stoplight system: green for low-cost investment providers, yellow for those that have at least one low-cost option and red for high-cost providers to avoid. In addition, the site provides letter grades and full lists of 403(b) plan vendors for more than 4,800 school districts representing about half the country's public school teachers, Otter says. Employees in these districts can use the site to check out their plans and spot lower-cost investment options. Those in other districts should request a list of vendors from their school district and look for green-rated providers, Otter says. If none are available, the low-cost option offered by a yellow-rated provider may be the next-best choice.

The site, and its affiliated Facebook group, offer step-by-step instructions for how to move money from one option to another. □

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Holiday crowds at airports and on highways are expected to be even bigger than last year



A Southwest Airlines plane makes its final approach at Dallas Love Field Airport near a the full moon and downtown Dallas buildings, Monday, Nov. 27, 2023.

Associated Press

By **DAVID KOENIG**
AP Airlines Writer

More Americans are expected to fly or drive far from home over Christmas than did last year, putting a cap on a busy year for travel. Auto club AAA forecast Monday that 115.2 million people will go 50 miles or more from home during the 10 days between Dec. 23 and New Year's Day. That's 2.2% more than AAA predicted during the comparable stretch last year. "That desire to get away is stronger than we have seen in a very long time," said AAA spokeswoman Aixa Diaz. "People are willing to adjust their budgets in other areas of their life, but they want to keep traveling." The AAA pre-

dicts that the holiday season will still fall 3% short of record travel in 2019, the last Christmas before COVID-19 hit the United States. Air travel in the U.S. has already rebounded, surpassing 2019 levels. The number of travelers going through U.S. airport checkpoints is up 12.4% over last year and 1.4% higher than in 2019, according to the Transportation Security Administration. Travel around the Thanksgiving Day holiday topped 2019 numbers, peaking at 2.9 million a single-day record for TSA screened on Sunday, Nov. 26. Airlines are predicting a blockbuster holiday season. Airlines for America says 39 million people about 2.8

million a day on average will board U.S. flights between Dec. 20 and Jan. 2. The trade group for big U.S. carriers expects about 3 million on the peak days - the Thursday and Friday before Christmas and the four days after the holiday. The airlines count people more than once if they take connecting flights instead of nonstops, so their numbers are higher than those reported by TSA. Travel is strong even though many Americans say they are worried about the economy. In an AP-NORC poll last week, seven out of 10 people surveyed rated the economy as poor. But at least inflation has cooled off a bit. Airline passengers are getting a slight break from last year's high prices. Average fares in October were 13% lower than a year earlier, according to the govern-

ment's latest data. AAA predicts that 7.5 million people will fly in the U.S. in late December, but the club expects far more nearly 104 million to drive over the holidays. Motorists will pay a bit less to fill up. The national average price for a gallon of gasoline was \$3.19 at the end of last week, compared with \$3.33 a year earlier, according to AAA. □

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Why Mariah Carey's 'All I Want for Christmas is You' became so popular

By **DAVID BAUDER**
AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If anything about Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" annoys you, best to avoid shopping malls now. Or the radio. Maybe music altogether, for that matter. Her 1994 carol dominates holiday music like nothing else.

The Christmas colossus has reached No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart the past four years in a row measuring the most popular songs each week by airplay, sales and streaming, not just the holiday-themed and it's reasonable to assume 2023 will be no different. One expert predicts it will soon exceed \$100 million in earnings. Even its ringtone has sold millions.

"That song is just embedded in history now," says David Foster, the 16-time Grammy-winning composer and producer. "It's embedded in Christmas. When you think of Christmas right now, you think of that song."

Yet the story behind "All I Want for Christmas is You" is not all holly and mistletoe.

The song's co-authors, Carey and Walter Afanasieff, are in a mystifying feud. The authors of a different song with the same title have sued seeking \$20 million in damages. While Carey calls herself the Queen of Christmas, her bid to trademark that title failed.

Every year on Nov. 1, the song's hibernation ends when Carey posts on social media that "it's time" to play it again. This year's message depicted her being freed from a block of ice to make the declaration.

In both music and lyrics, the song was perfectly engineered for success, says Joe Bennett, musicologist and professor at the Berkeley College of Music. And it came from an artist who was at the top of her game at the time.

"All I Want for Christmas is



Mariah Carey performs at the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square, Dec. 31, 2017, in New York.

You" works as a love and holiday song. Carey sets it up: She doesn't care about all the holiday trappings, she has one thing on her mind. She sprinkles in specific holiday references, from Santa Claus to mistletoe.

The instruments and brisk arrangement recall Phil Spector's 1965 album, "A Christmas Gift for You," itself a holiday classic. To top it off, part of the melody slyly references "White Christmas," Bennett says.

"That was my goal, to do something timeless," Carey explained in a recent "Good Morning America" interview.

Billboard has produced lists of top seasonal hits since 2010, and "All I Want for Christmas is You" has been No. 1 for 57 of the 62 weeks it has run, said Gary Trust, chart director. Will Page, Spotify's former chief economist and author of the book "Pivot," estimates the song will exceed \$100 million in earnings this holiday

season.

"By most objective measures," Bennett says, "it's the most successful Christmas song of all time."

As Afanasieff has told it, much of the work on "All I Want for Christmas is You" was done by him and Carey working in a rented house in the summer of 1994. The team had a history, working on Carey's albums "Emotions" and "Music Box."

He started with a boogie-woogie piano, tossing out melodic ideas that Carey would respond to with lyrics, he said on last year's podcast, "Hot Takes & Deep Dives with Jess Rothschild" (Afanasieff did not return messages from The Associated Press). Later, Carey completed the lyrics herself and Afanasieff recorded all the instruments, he said.

Then things became complicated. Carey was married at the time to Tommy Mottola, head of Sony Music. They broke up in 1997

and her relationship with Afanasieff, who kept working for Mottola, became a casualty of that fractured marriage. Afanasieff said they've spoken once in more than 20 years, and it his contributions have been written out of Carey's telling of the song's creation. On "Good Morning America" last month, she said, "I was working on it by myself so I was writing on this little Casio keyboard, writing down words and thinking about, 'What do I think about Christmas? What do I love? What do I want? What do I dream of?'" she says.

"And that's what started it."

Afanasieff sounds almost bewildered by the turn of events.

He told Variety in 1999 that every holiday season he has to defend himself against people who don't believe he co-wrote the song.

"Mariah has been very wonderful, positive and a

force of nature," he told Variety. "She's the one that made the song a hit and she's awesome.

But she definitely does not share credit where credit is due."

Last month, songwriters Andy Stone and Troy Powers sued Carey and Afanasieff in federal court in California, seeking \$20 million in copyright infringement and citing their own 1989 country song, "All I Want for Christmas is You." Their song has a similar theme, with a narrator desiring a love interest before Christmas comforts. The writers cite an "overwhelming likelihood" that Carey and Afanasieff had heard their song.

The two songs have no musical similarities, Berkeley's Bennett says, and the theme is hardly unique. He pointed out Bing Crosby's "You're All I Want for Christmas," Carla Thomas' "All I Want for Christmas is You" and Buck Owens' "All I Want for Christmas, Dear, is You."

Says the musicologist: "It's nonsense."

In his podcast appearance, Afanasieff noted how Foster once told him that "All I Want for Christmas is You" was the last song to enter the Christmas canon and "that vault is sealed."

Foster told AP he exaggerated a little, but not a lot. Writing a new holiday song is brutally hard, since you're competing with not just current hits but hundreds of years of songs and memories. The old classics never go away.

"I just stay away from them, because they scare me," Foster says. "Lyrically, it's sort of all been done before better than I can ever do." While he appreciates Foster's compliment, Afanasieff told Rothschild that he hoped others don't take it to heart.

"I urge songwriters every year," he says. "It's time to write the next 'All I Want for Christmas is You.'" □

Associated Press

If college athletes can earn NIL money from the schools, what becomes of donor-backed collectives?

By ERIC OLSON
AP Sports Writer

Donor-fueled collectives that raise money and funnel it to college athletes through name, image and likeness opportunities they facilitate probably won't go away entirely if NCAA President Charlie Baker's proposals for paying athletes become reality. But changes will be inevitable. Baker has recommended that Division I schools be allowed to enter into licensing deals directly with their athletes, essentially paying them to be school ambassadors. He suggested that the wealthiest schools be required to pay half of their athletes at least \$30,000 per year. For a school like Texas, with some 700 athletes, that would be a sum of some \$10 million.

Collectives, technically operating independently from the schools they serve, have sprung up across the country since the NCAA began allowing athletes to make money off their celebrity two years ago. The collectives some 200 of them seek donations from boosters, alumni and fans and then arrange opportunities for athletes to be paid for endorsements, public appearances, autograph-signing and posting branded content to their person-



Incoming NCAA president Charlie Baker speaks during the NCAA Convention, Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023, in San Antonio.

al social media channels. Experts said the collectives could be absorbed into athletic departments to provide some of the same services they do now or they could continue operating independently.

Jason Belzer, founder of Student Athlete NIL, which operates several commercial collectives for schools across the country, said fund-raising by outside collectives would be unnecessary if athlete-targeted donations were allowed to be made directly to the school.

Corey Staniscia, director of the Fowler Ave Collective that backs USF athletics, said he would "welcome the day" when NIL work can be done through schools themselves.

"Allow the institutions to contract with athletes even just for their rights of publicity to directly sell merch, co branded billboards and bobble heads for fans," Staniscia posted on X. "That really isn't moving mountains here. It's not too difficult."

Opendorse CEO Blake Lawrence, whose com-

pany partners with schools to help initiate, track and monitor NIL deals, said there will be a place for collectives in the environment proposed by Baker. "Third-party compensation for NIL activities that are not controlled by the institution will exist," Lawrence said. "It will be very hard to remove that element. I think there may be less pressure on the collectives in terms of how much they're tasked with sourcing for athletes and their third-party payments. But they do not go away." Athletes.org co-founder

Jim Cavale, whose organization seeks to give athletes a voice in plotting the future of college sports and an NIL pioneer as developer of the platform IN-FLCR, said collectives could be folded into the athletic departments not so much for fund-raising but instead to activate and service NIL deals. NIL activity directly tied to schools could raise issues of liability and almost certainly would bring Title IX implications. Under the current setup, with NIL collectives operating outside the schools they support, the federal civil rights law prohibiting sex-based discrimination by schools receiving federal funds theoretically does not apply.

Thomas Thomas Jr., co-founder and CEO at NIL software company Basepath, said Baker's proposal "could be a big win for female athletes."

Kassandra Ramsey, a Washington-based sports attorney who specializes in NIL issues, said if a school has "significant involvement" with NIL, it would have a responsibility to ensure there are equitable opportunities for men and women. However, she said, that doesn't mean male and female athletes have to make the same amount of money. □

Rodriguez would earn \$91 million over 5 seasons with option under deal with Diamondbacks

PHOENIX (AP) — Eduardo Rodriguez would earn \$91 million over five seasons if a 2028 option is triggered in his contract with the Arizona Diamondbacks, an amount that could increase to \$92 million based on innings. He would earn \$100 million over five years if pitches a specified amount of innings and finishes high four in Cy Young Award voting in each of the first four seasons.

Rodriguez's deal, announced Friday, calls for salaries of \$14 million next year, \$20 million in 2025, \$21

million in 2026 and \$19 million in 2027.

There is an option for 2028 that would be guaranteed at \$17 million if he has 150 innings in 2027 or 300 in 2026 and '27 combined, or at \$18 million if he has 175 innings in 2027 or 350 in 2026 and '27 combined. If he fails to meet those levels, it becomes a \$17 million mutual option with a \$6 million buy-out. The option price can escalate by up to \$6 million; \$1 million for each top 10 finish in Cy Young Award voting in 2026 or '27, and \$3 million for each top five Cy

Young finish in those years. Rodriguez would get a \$1 million award bonus if he finishes among the top three in Cy Young voting in 2024 or '25. His deal includes a hotel suite on road trips. Rodriguez can list 10 teams he cannot be traded to without his consent, a provision he had in his previous contract and used to block a deal to the Los Angeles Dodgers at the Aug. 1 deadline. Rodriguez and his agent cited family reasons. A 30-year-old left-hander from Venezuela, Rodriguez spent the past two seasons



Detroit Tigers starting pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez throws to a New York Yankees batter during the first inning of a baseball game Sept. 7, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press

with the Detroit Tigers and went 13-9 with a 3.30 ERA in 2023.

He joins an Arizona rotation that includes NL Cy Young

Award finalist Zac Gallen, veteran Merrill Kelly and youngsters like righty Brandon Pfaadt and lefty Tommy Henry. □

Officiating again stole the spotlight even though the call against the Chiefs was correct

By **ROB MAADDI**

AP Pro Football Writer

Travis Kelce and Kadarius Toney had combined to make the play of the season to give the Kansas City Chiefs a late lead when the celebration quickly turned to silence.

An offside penalty on Toney negated the score. Anytime there's a big play in an NFL game, announcers are quick to point out whether a yellow flag has been thrown. Fans can't get too excited until they hear on television or see in person that there's no penalty on the play. Players often hesitate to celebrate. The quality of officiating in the NFL is inconsistent.



Kansas City Chiefs wide receiver Kadarius Toney runs to the end zone after catching a lateral by teammate Travis Kelce during the second half of an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, in Kansas City, Mo.

Associated Press

But that's nothing new. It's been that way for decades. Even with instant replay, plenty of calls are missed. It seems every week there's at least one blown call or non-call in an important spot that helps change the outcome of a game. Fans whine. Players and coaches complain. The league sometimes admits mistakes and admonishes referees. Then, it happens again the following week and the week after that. Overall, penalties are up this year but not by much. Entering Sunday night's Eagles-Cowboys game, an average of 14.4 penalty flags were thrown per game. □

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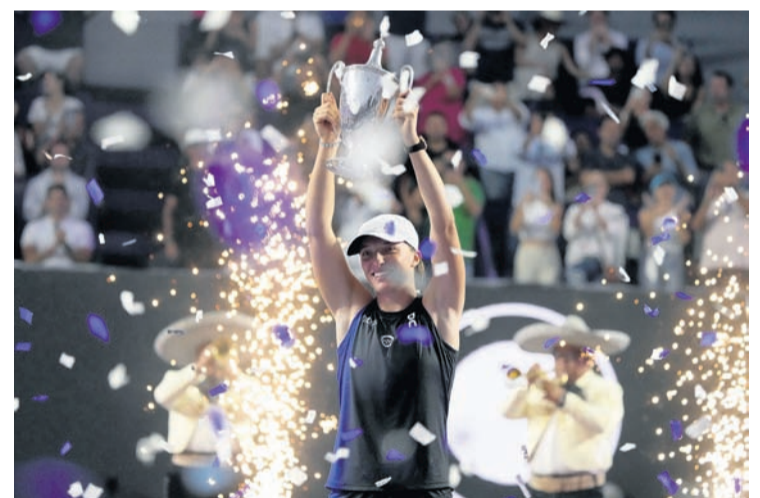
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Iga Swiatek is the first woman since Serena Williams to win WTA Player of the Year twice in a row



Poland's Iga Swiatek holds her trophy after her victory over Jessica Pegula, of the United States, in the women's singles final of the WTA Finals tennis championships, in Cancun, Mexico, Monday, Nov. 6, 2023.

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Iga Swiatek's second consecutive season-ending No. 1 ranking helped her collect a second consecutive WTA Player of the Year award on Monday, making her the first woman since Serena Williams to claim that honor twice in a row. Williams, who retired last year, was the WTA Player of the Year every season from 2012-15, the final four of the seven total times the American claimed that award. Swiatek went 68-11 in 2023 with a tour-leading six titles, including at the French Open in June. That was Swiatek's third championship at Roland Garros and fourth overall at a Grand Slam tournament. The 22-year-old from Poland wrapped up the season with an undefeated run at the WTA Finals in Cancun, Mexico, last month, which allowed her to overtake Aryna Sabalenka atop the rankings. □